

## Ante-Bellum Floating Palaces of the Alabama River and the "Good Old Times In Dixie"

The following paragraphs are from the Mobile Daily Register of March 8, 1914.

The painful intelligence of the burning of the Orlene St. John and the loss of a number of valuable lives, instilled among them several of our esteemed friends and fellow citizens, was fully confirmed yesterday by the arrival of the Dan Pratt.

The St. John was on her upward trip with some 60 passengers, several of whom were females. On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 5th, inst., as the boat was turning a bend in the river about five miles above Bridgeport, a fire was discovered to have broken out forward in the woodrack and although the alarm was instantly given, so rapid was the progress of the flames that all egress from the cabin on the upper deck was cut off. The boat was running ashore, but the rope tiller being burned, the stern swung into the stream. Means were taken to lower the passengers onto the main deck aft, but the yawl, which might have been brought to their rescue, was taken charge of by the carpenter and two or three of the hands, who sprang into it without oars and as it drifted, thus totally destroying all hopes of escape from that quarter.

They could swim sprang into the stream, but the women and children and men untaught of the swimmer's art were left to perish by one or the other of the hostile elements.

We learn that of the women and children on board not one escaped among them were Mrs. and Miss Vaughan, who had spent sometime in the city, also Mrs. Cain of South Carolina. Of our resident citizens we are to report the loss of George B. Lindsey, Esq., who, it is said, could not swim and Mr. Brooks, a bookseller on Water street.

There may have been others, but as records and papers of the boat were lost we are without the means, at present, of ascertaining the extent of the calamity. There are said to have been nine women and three children on board, though some accounts make the number less. We have many interesting particulars connected with the catastrophe, but they do not come within the scope of this publication. It is estimated that about 40 persons perished in the disaster. There was a very large amount of property in money and goods on board, and only a small part covered by insurance. The boat, we are told, was insured to the amount of \$10,000 in three of the city offices.

After having learned the above, a friend who was himself a passenger on the boat and whose escape was precarious, kindly furnished us with the following account of the disaster.

"Dear Sir: At your request I will relate to you as many of the circumstances attending the recent loss of the steamboat Orlene St. John as just now occur to my recollection. About 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon of March 5, the alarm of fire was given, the boat being then about three miles above Bridgeport, on her passage up the river.

Some 30 or 40 cords of pitch pine had been taken on board a short time before between the piles of which doubtless some sparks found their way and kindled into flames before the fact was discovered. So rapid was the spread of the fire that notwithstanding the commendable presence of mind on the part of the pilot in steering the boat toward the land, the moment he was aware of the disaster there were few people able to make their escape over the bows of the boat. The forward staircase was soon enveloped in flames, and the wind drove them and the smoke in suffocating volumes aft. Thus it was that so many persons found themselves compelled to leap from the stern into the current of the river, where perhaps it runs with as great rapidity as in any portion of its course.

"From the information I can gather, and my own recollection, I suppose there were seven ladies in the cabin and four or five children. Not one of them was saved. Their agonizing shrieks and prayers yet remain in the ears of all who heard them. One mother placed her child on a mattress and vainly endeavored to breast with it the relentless stream, but though aided eventually by the praiseworthy exertions of the chief mate, she and the object of her final struggles were soon buried beneath the waves.

"A father (Mr. Thomas Carson) was drowned in his fruitless efforts to save his son, though encouraged in his failing efforts by the heroic boy. A woman, the wife of a deck passenger, was seen on her knees enveloped in flames, and was observed consequently to cast herself from the burning wreck. Four passengers were saved by a skiff, after having floated down to Bridgeport on boards and barrels, and five others, two or three miles below, were seen after the shades of night had fallen, exhausted, numbed and cramped—they had given up all hopes of rescue, I suppose, from what I have heard, and from 25 to 40 persons had perished.

A large quantity of California gold dust, ingots and coin, were lost in the trunks of passengers, and a large amount of money and treasures was deposited in the strong box, of which, later, there was some hope of recovery. So delightful and all-absorbing is the consideration of rescued existence, that those who have in this fatal accident lost all of a life of toil, have received with cheerfulness the congratulations of their friends—and though deprived of clothing, have proceeded with thankfulness to their families and friends.

That model of the American gentleman, Colonel Preston, of South Carolina, will perhaps not pardon my intruding his name before the public in recording his noble proffers of his princely purse to destitute sufferers. The neighbors, Judge Bridges and Mr. Petway, also deserve the most honorable mention for the liberal manner in which their hospitalities were dispensed.

The captain of the boat will not be denied the sympathy of the public in this, his terrible misfortune, not only because he was in no wise responsible for the occurrence, but inasmuch as he felt it like a child, and endeavored to avert it, as an officer and a man. The Orlene St. John was in command

of Capt. Tim Meaher, a man of great personal courage and sound discretion. In the issue of the Register from which the above was taken we find the following old-timers advertised for the two rivers, viz:

For the Bigbee river: Lowndes, Robert Otis; Forest Monarch, Henderson Kenney; Sunny South, Charles Miller. Eliza, S. G. Stone; Clara, J. M. Bralnard.

For the Alabama river: Farmer, W. F. James; Daniel Pratt, F. M. Johnson; Isabella, S. C. Burwell; May Clifton, Tom Adams; Selma, A. H. Johnson; Emperor, Jesse J. Cox.

The following week the William Bradstreet was announced in place of the ill-fated Orlene St. John. Tim Meaher on deck. Cotton at that date was 10 3/4 for middling, and the editorials of the Register were for the constitution and the union, but no union without a strict construction of the constitution. Right for over half a century we can attest.

### MISS ERNESTINE NOH

(Continued from Preceding Page.)

granted \$25,000 for expenses, and in addition to those named there were several stenographers and two economic experts in the party. Dr. Johnson and I went as interpreters, and assistants, Dr. Johnson to Dr. Butterfield and I to Dr. Coulter.

"On returning, Dr. Johnson and I did some of the work of translating and all the bibliography for the report of the American Commission last winter."

The American Commission to investigate Agricultural Cooperation in Europe, consisted of 62 voting delegates from 29 states, and 5 of the 62 were women. Dr. Johnson and Miss Noh being delegates from their state, Tennessee.

The United States Commission consisted of 7 men, 4 assistants and a staff of stenographers and Dr. Johnson and Miss Noh were 2 of the 4 assistants. "Dr. T. N. Cooper of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Harvard University appointed us as volunteer workers in the Bureau of Rural Organization of the United States Department of Agriculture, at a salary each of one dollar per year."

Just then the telephoned interrupted. "That brings us," said Miss Noh, after answering the phone and discussing whether she could or could not remain over for the Business Men's Luncheon, and deciding that she could not—"that brings us almost to date, does it not?"

"One thing we have accomplished is that we have caused to be created a new department in the Tennessee Federation of Women's Clubs—the department of Rural Organization of which Miss Johnson is chairman, and I am vice-chairman. "Our work is just begun. We hope it will spread tremendously, and that among other states, Florida will be greatly benefitted thereby."

### BETTER THAN SPANK NG

Spanking does not cure children of bed-wetting. There is a constitutional cause for this trouble. Mrs. M. Summers, Box W. South Bend, Ind., will send free to any mother her successful home treatment, with full instructions. Send no money, but write her to-day if your children trouble you in this way. Don't blame the child, the chances are it can't help it. This treatment also cures adults and aged people troubled with urine-guilt by day or night. (Advertisement)

### St. Nick in the City

By GEORGE JAY SMITH

**T** WAS the night before Christmas, and through the apartment the rooms were so still you could hear how your heart went. The janitor banked all the fires ere he slept. And the heaters no more hissed and hammered and wept. The stockings were hung by the steam-pipes with care, in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there. And in their small bed, in a room eight by ten, the children dreamed Christmas had dawned once again. And now on the roof from his air-sleigh alighted Dear jolly St. Nick, who no good child e'er slighted. He turned off the sparker and slowed down the motor—His reindeer he'd sold for a new auto-ster—



And then looked around for a chimney to enter, And seeing but one left himself down the center. "Twas a pretty tight fit for a saint of his size, And the soot made him smutty and got in his eyes; But when used to flying one won't mind a flue. So he kept on a sliding that long chimney through. Then he paused, for the dolls in his pack shrieked "You'll burn us!" Alas! he'd arrived at the steam-heating furnace! In fright all the Teddy-bears squeaked out in chorus, "A too warm reception! What fate is before us?" The toy cars and engines all rattled and bumped. The stuffed cows and lambs moored and bleated and jumped. "A pretty scrape, this!" said St. Nick; "but before Giving up let me see if I can't force the door!" Happy thought, for the door opened outward with ease, And he wriggled right through, as neat as you please! Then he rushed up the steps to the hallways above And stopped at each door where lived children to love, And selecting their gifts, whether useful or handsome



He hurried them with skill right in through the transom; And what is most strange—all untruths I think shocking— A lot of them landed in each small one's stocking! At length to the flats next the roof he ascended, Where he paused when his last distribution was ended, And, leaving his finger aside of his nose, And winking one eye, he struck a gay pose, And burst into laughter that shook his round belly— You remember, of course—like a bowlful of jelly: "Apartment-house architects truly are clever, But can they contrive to keep me out? Never!" Then he climbed to the roof, snuffed the air, made a dash, Bounced into his sleigh, and was off like a flash! (Copyright, Frank A. Munsey Co.)

**The Christmas Stocking.** St. Nicholas seems to have been the original of our Santa Claus. He was the bishop of Myra about the year 300 and was very popular because of his good deeds and kindness, especially to children, whose patron saint he is supposed to be. An old legend says that he wished to secretly bestow a gift upon an old nobleman who, though poor, did not want anyone to know of his poverty. When the good bishop reached the house he saw the old gentleman asleep by the fire, so he climbed to the top of the chimney and dropped his gift into it, thinking it would fall on the hearth. But it happened that the money fell into one of the old gentleman's stockings, which his daughter had hung up to dry, where it was found and used as a dowry for his eldest daughter. And the story goes on to say that St. Nicholas never failed to put a gift in the stockings which were hung up for him thereafter when a daughter of the house was to marry.



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**I**T'S too bad Christmas doesn't come more frequently for our pleasure and the pleasure we give. But, maybe once a year is enough for our pocketbooks. Now, one thing is clear: The best sort of a Christmas gift for anybody is something that person really wants.

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